

# The Bloomf

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## FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

### Easter Week in Florence.

BY JESSE BENEDICT CARTER.

The arrival of her Majesty, Queen Victoria, in Florence about ten days ago has been the exciting event of the past week. The donkey and the bath chair with the Indian servants got here first and her Majesty followed two or three days later. She is living in the Villa Fabbricotti just a little outside the town toward Fiesole. I can just see the tower roof from the window.

She drives out every day. On the box of her coach is seated a gigantic Highlander in costume and sitting beside her Majesty is usually to be found the Princess Beatrice. Far more imposing than the Queen herself is the chief of her Indian retinue, a gorgeous looking individual who always drives in an open carriage.

One afternoon I went to the Casino or Park in the south-eastern part of the city where I strolled along and watched the whirling stream of fashionable carriages and pedestrians. The Italians dress much more like the Americans than the Germans do, and altogether it was an elegant looking crowd.

Florence is like a big railway centre just now. It is overflowing with strangers of all nationalities. There is the usual crowd of English and Americans who are dressed in proper tourist trim and who stroll about with that air of possessing a first mortgage on the universe which is so characteristic of the Saxon race. Then there is a big medical Congress at present in Rome and that has drawn to Italy several hundreds of German physicians with their wives. The German on his travels in foreign countries is such a curious creature, just like a child strayed out of the nursery. He strolls the streets arm in arm with his wife and tries to look unconcerned but it is all a failure. He is a fish out of water and every Italian realizes it.

It is fun to go down to the piazza della Signoria and stand in front of the porch of the Lances and watch the groups, drawing inspiration from Baedeker surrounded by the pedlers of articles ranging all the way from matches through newspapers and flowers to guide books and lottery tickets. They look so travel worn (the travelers I mean, but the pedlers do too for that matter.) The piazza is full of doves and it is a pretty sight to see the little English children feeding them with the corn which the boot-blacks sell for the purpose. Facing on this piazza is the Palazzo Vecchio and the gallery of the Uffizi. This gallery is connected by a covered archway with the Pitti Palace so that the two form one vast picture gallery.

There is always the type of the "money rich" and the "culture poor" American who hires guides on all provocation and where attention is divided between trying to appreciate the crumbs which his guide is throwing out for his mortification and in making his own practical comments on art, which, if they are "shocking," at times have at least the virtue of ingenuousness. Brides and grooms though not as plentiful as at Venice are thick enough to prove that marriage is not popularly considered a "rite."

The day before "Holy Week," the day before of "Holy Week," it is the custom of every good Catholic to visit seven sepulchres (as the imitation of Christ's sepulchre in the various churches is called.) Though far from being a "good Catholic" or a "bad one" either for that matter I determined to follow the custom and see the people and was well repaid. It was a series of pictures which have photographed themselves deep in my mind. Every church had something distinct and characteristic about it. I went to Santa Croce, where Michael Angelo lies buried, then to the Annunziata, where the altar was ablaze with candles, and so on till I came finally into the Cathedral (Duomo) at six o'clock. I shall never forget the impression that seized me as I walked in out of the hot sun, out of all the hubbub of the Piazza where fruit sellers were shouting and omnibuses were thundering by, and out of the world into the cool darkness of the cathedral. The light effect was most wonderful. All the place where I stood was in deep shadow but down through the stained glass windows of the dome came the golden beams of the setting sun. The light played above the altar and gilded the top of

the hanging crucifix and then below came the darkness till it was relieved again by the candles on the high altar. The great organ ceased its sound and the plaintive chant of the Priests arose—the effect of their harsh voices echoing between the lofty pillars was like a wail of despair. I stood transfixed and drank it all in while my soul went out in a prayer above the incense and the candles, above the sound of the voices beyond the rays of the sun to that God who loves to be called our Father.

I had a most interesting drive with friends on the evening of Good Friday. We started from the "Piazza della Signoria" under the shadow of the "Palazzo Vecchio," and drove out through the quaint little streets with their shops all brilliantly lighted, across the "Arno" through the "Porta Romana," and so slowly on, winding up to the top of the hill of "Michael Angelo," where his bronze statue of "David" stands overlooking the city.

It was a calm, still, almost summer evening. The stars were all sparkling as they can only in the clear blue of the Italian sky. Below us in silence lay Florence. Between us and the city flowed the Arno, lined on both sides by long rows of gas lamps. In the distance the great dome of the Cathedral and Grotto tower rose up against the deep blue of the starry sky. Behind us in the gloom we could just trace the outline of the colossal figure of the "David," and still further back clear cut against the horizon stood the church of San Miniato. As we stood there the eastern sky began to brighten and soon the great full moon arose and bathed all the scene with its silvery light. The whole drive was full of beauty.

On the Saturday before Easter there is an ancient ceremony in Florence performed every year since the crusades called "Lo Scoppio Del Carro." It is regarded by the peasants as a religious rite, and by the success of the whole thing they judge of the prospects of the coming crops.

It was a bright sunny morning and at 11:30 I found myself in the midst of a vast crowd standing in the Piazza before the cathedral. Around me were hundreds of peasants in the variegated colors which an Italian loves so dearly. Patient blue eyed "Contadina" mothers with their little blue eyed daughters in their arms, excited black eyed fathers wearing the long fur trimmed coats of the peasant, holding by the hand their little boys with their long curling hair and queer old dirty skin caps, the colors of which would have made artists green with jealousy.

In the centre of the square stood a tall pyramid of wood painted black, scarred with fire and scratched and broken with age. This was the holy car around whose sides were strung long rows of fire crackers and pin wheels. From the top of the car a wire ran into the church, through the centre door, up the long aisle and three times around the high altar.

At last the chant of the priests was heard and the column moved slowly out of the baptistery across the street and into the cathedral. The effect of color was wonderful. The white and scarlet and black glistened for a moment in the sunlight, and then disappeared through the marble doorway into the black cavernous depths of the church.

A few moments of breathless expectation followed, and then the dove from the high altar came winging along the wire with the fire in its beak, touched and lighted the fuse and disappeared back into the church again.

Then the tumult began. The church bells which had been muffled since Thursday began their pealing,

the pin wheels commenced their gyrations and the fire crackers seized this opportune moment to rend the air with their explosion.

When this was all over four huge white Bullocks with gilded horns and great bunches of flowers on their yokes were led in to draw the car away, and "Lo Scoppio Del Carro" was finished for 1894.

### Mrs. Cleveland.

Mrs. Cleveland is not a beauty in the sense of society's beauties. She is rather

of the Musidora style. Which one swain would see and apostrophize in her simple elegance, and at the turn of her rustic head toward him would run away, as if from virtue's wonder. It is possible that with time those northern, uncoquettish charms might grow a little hard. In a superior country church, at a Sunday school picnic, at the seaside harvest home when Neptune throws his long arms along the beach and seeks to crawl ashore, this pleasing, proper wife would be a charming setting to the shadows, greenery or sun.—Cincinnati

### FIN DE SIECLE.

Oh, this is an end of the century tale,  
Or the calm, small final passion;  
Of a man and a maiden who walked into love  
In the end of the century fashion.

Now, perhaps you suppose that he read in her  
eyes  
The sweet message that made him grow bold;  
Not at all! 'Twas expressed in the bend of her  
back  
And disclosed in the set of her shoulder.

They talked about art and religion and cults  
In a way condescending and airy.  
They gave Mr. Kipling their qualified praise  
And expressed their approval of Barrie.

And when, on occasion, they talked of their  
love  
They analyzed all their sensations,  
Dissecting poor love very neatly, because  
They wanted to make observations.

But the end! Were they wed in the usual way?  
Did fate their lives cruelly sever?  
Oh, this is an end of the century tale!  
And has no sort of ending whatever!

Hilda Johnson in *Vogue*.

### Saved by a Pony.

Elephants are extremely afraid of horses, writes Major John Butler in "Travels In Assam." To that face he owed the deliverance of his wife and child from a terrible death. With them he was traversing the jungle over an exceedingly rough road through forest and grass jungle alternately. The way had to be cut as they advanced. I was in the lead on a large elephant in my howdah, with a good battery of guns, when about midday I heard behind me a general cry of alarm and hastily rode to the scene of danger. It seems that just after I had passed, with the coolies who cut down the jungle, a huge Makana elephant rushed from the jungle in a terrible rage and pursued the little baggage elephant, which was just behind my wife and child. The little elephant screeched and fled for its life, straight ahead. Fortunately a pony was led beside the palkee, which contained my wife and child. The wild elephant was close upon them, and they closed their eyes in horror, expecting to be dragged from their places and trampled to death. At that moment the great beast caught sight of the pony. It stopped short, turned aside and fled back to the jungle as if pursued by an evil spirit. The men were filled with astonishment. Most of them had fled to the protection of shelter trees, leaving my wife and child alone.—Youth's Companion.

Extract From a Chicago Novel.

Spring had come, and as Gladys went to the door a gust of summer breeze, laden with sleet and snowflakes, blew in. She shuddered a little as she saw the November rain pouring on the heaped up snowbanks, above which June roses were blooming.

When evening had come and the moon poured a blinding flood of mellow light over the scene, she set out for a walk in the warm garden, her bare shoulders gleaming through a thin wrap of Spanish lace. Yes, Reginald de Mont-Courcy was there. But as she saw him she gave a shriek of horror and with a convulsive gesture that threw her mantle to the ground murmured:

"Ah, Reginald, Reginald, why are you so rash, wearing that heavy seal-skin cap on night so hot as this and having nothing but thin slippers to protect your feet from the snow and ice of the sidewalk?"—Chicago Record.

### An Obliging Young Man.

The young man's father had decided

that he had led a life of idleness long enough, so he had put to work in his store. Shortly afterward he asked of the manager of the business:

"How is Charley doing?"

"First rate."

"Is he industrious? Does he keep busy?"

"Well, you see, he's right considerate about that. Some young men in his position would jump in and try to do things. But he seems just as anxious as can be to keep out of the way."—Washington Star.

### The Mourners.

"I never realized until today," said a young woman to me, "how true is that quotation, 'Man's inhumanity to man' makes countless thousands mourn."

"What's the matter now?" I asked rather unsympathetically.

"Oh, nothing more than usual, but Harry won't let Harry come to see me any more, and all the girls' fathers are the same." Then she sighed deeply and added dolefully, "We girls are the thousands who mourn."—Washington Post.

### Following Directions.

Mr. Grogan—O! take the powders, doctor, but it is sicker O! am than O! was before! O! began.

Mr. Bowes—Did you follow the directions—as much as could be headed on a 10 cent piece every three hours?

Mr. Grogan—O! followed them as near as O! cud, doctor. O! had no tin cint pieces in the house, so O! tule as much as O! cud half—Indianapolis Journal.

Innocent mirth of every description inspires a sympathetic pleasure and works a good that is contagious. Wit and humor are among the great refreshments of life and are gifts in trust to those who possess them for the cheer and exhilaration of mankind.

Love is a bird of passage that women await with curiosity in youth, retain with pleasure in maturer years and allow to escape with regret when old age creeps upon them.

When you are on the street and wish to carry an umbrella under your arm, carry it with the handle behind you so that the lance end will point downward in front of you.

The harbor of Rio de Janeiro is one of the finest on the globe. It has 50 miles of anchorage, sufficient to float the navies of the world.

The casting of hollow ware was for a number of years a secret and was kept in one family for more than 50 years.

New Zealand has set apart two islands on which hunting and trapping are forbidden.

### CHINA'S GREAT IMPERIAL SEAL.

How Anam Under French Protection Destroyed Her Badge of Servitude.

Among the many unique curiosities in M. Jules Patenotre's collection at the French legation at Washington is an imprint of the great Chinese imperial seal. The loss of the original die which the imprint represents was one of the greatest disappointments in the career of this clever diplomat. He wanted it for his collection, but the orientals were a little too many for him that time, and this is how it happened:

The French had been carrying on the war in Tonquin during the early part of 1884 and finally succeeded in forcing China to surrender her claim of suzerainty over the empire of Anam in favor of a French protectorate. All the state documents of the Anamites up to this period had not only borne the national seal, but likewise the imperial seal of China, as a mark of vassalage.

When, on June 6, 1884, however, Patenotre obtained the signature to the treaty giving Anam over to the protection of France, the great Chinese seal was brought before the convention of Anamite statesmen and French officers and diplomats. M. Patenotre in his report to the home office described the scene as follows:

"We took out seats about a large table in the parlor of the French residence. There were naval officers from Admiral Courbet's fleet and several officers from the French garrison at Hue. The great seal was laid upon the table. It was 5 inches square and made of solid silver, weighing about 18 pounds. The handle represented a camel kneeling.

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